

## **General Consumer Guidance on Choosing Providers**

One of the goals of the changes being made to the public mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services is to increase the number of qualified providers that are available to serve you and your family. You may begin to hear from providers interested in providing services to you. When making a choice of service providers, one of the things you should think about is the ethics of your provider. A provider's ethics are often an indication of the quality of care that they provide. The World Book Dictionary defines ethics as "formal or professional rules of right and wrong" and a "system of conduct or behavior." Consumers and families will usually receive higher quality services from providers that hold themselves to high professional standards and ethics.

Look for service providers who are willing to spend the time to talk to you about what you can expect if you choose that agency. Be an informed consumer and base your decisions on facts and on the history of the provider agency, not on their promotional activities:

- Listen for opportunities to be involved. Does the provider promise you that you'll be able to have input into decisions about your care while you are receiving services? That is critical.
- Does the provider give you plenty of time to ask questions?
- Is the provider connected to the community and does the provider use a team approach? Bonuses and free gifts are a one time event and may be offered to compensate for a lack of quality services.
- It is never OK for a provider to try to recruit you when you're receiving active treatment from another provider, i.e.; during a counseling session.
- Trust your own judgment and if you have questions or concerns, contact your LME's customer services staff. When something about the way a provider tries to get your business doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.